



A.R.C. Explained!

# The New Amberola GRAPHIC

## Autumn Number

82

October, 1992  
(mailed early November)

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October, 1992  
(Autumn)

# The New Amberola Graphic

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## About Advertising

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## Editor's Notes

Well, the addition is still in progress, so chaos continues to reign at 37 Caledonia Street. Perhaps the first of the year will see this major extension completed.

As we proceed through the decade of the 1990s, many of us will realize we have recordings that are turning a hundred years old. Those fortunate enough to own Bell-Tainter and North American cylinders will reach this status first, followed by Berliner 5" discs, 7" Berliners, and standard brown wax cylinders of the 1890s. Just think of it...owning a little chunk of wax, ebonite, celluloid, or ozocerite containing a fragment of sound first uttered a century ago! What an exciting decade for collectors of this early period.

-M.F.B.



readers did not receive the last issue because they failed to notify us of a change in their address.

Don't let this happen to you! Let us know when you move (second class mail does not get forwarded automatically).



## LOUIS KAUFMAN, EDISON ARTIST

by Tom Vendetti

Two criticisms of Edison records frequently cited by collectors of classical music recordings are the exclusion of significant talent, and the lack of recording opportunities afforded to his artists. The first criticism is inaccurate especially when we consider Edison's stable of violinists. Here we see some of the centuries great figures. Carl Flesch (perhaps the greatest influence on modern violin playing), Spalding (America's foremost exponent of the fiddle), Prihoda, and Parlow form the front rank. Then comes a variety of first rate talent that surely entertained many lovers of the bow: Samuel Gardner, Daniel Melsa, Mischa Violin, Vera Barstow, Helen Ware, Irma Seydel, Marta de la Torre, Mary Zentay, and Josef Plastro Borissoff (brother of the great Michel Plastro). And there were others!

The second criticism, citing the lack of recording opportunities, is partly accurate. The Flesch recordings are few, but they comprise about half of his recorded output. Prihoda cut a good number of Edisons but made far more Polydors which were difficult for Americans to obtain. Prihoda also left examples of important repertoire on Edison records, that he never bothered to record again. Parlow was certainly neglected, but perhaps her only electrical commercial recordings were made for Edison. Spalding recorded prolifically for the wizard, and these records provide our only glimpse of this virtuoso between 1910 and 1925. Unfortunately, the other Edison violinists are scantily represented in the catalog.

Collecting Edison violin records provides rewards for the collector who patiently waits for a "new" artist, record, or take (!) to turn up in the antique shop or auction list. Not only can we find that treasure by an artist who is rather unknown and mysterious, but an occasional surprise may emerge through our collecting and research. This is the case with the recordings of Louis Kaufman, Edison artist, and world famous violinist.

Kaufman, who is currently living in Los Angeles, California was born in Portland, Oregon in 1905. He studied with Franz Kneisel at the Institute of Musical Art where he graduated with highest honors. Kaufman, a Naumburg Award winner in 1927, made his American debut in New York the same year. He was an early member of the Musical Arts Quartet as violist. He moved to Los Angeles with his bride, the pianist Annette Kaufman in 1933. In Los Angeles, Kaufman provided violin solos for the soundtracks of many great films such as Gone with the Wind, Wuthering Heights, and Modern Times. His solos were distinguished by their musical quality and



passionate tone. His early recordings were for Gennett and Edison. Later he recorded for a variety of labels including Concert Hall, Columbia, Vox, Lyricord, and Musical Masterpiece Society among others.

He was the first to record the newly rediscovered Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi in 1949. Kaufman became recognized as an articulate exponent of neglected masterpieces of the past. But he was most acclaimed as an ardent champion of modern violin literature which he performed and recorded frequently. He lent the highest level of virtuosity with rich and expressive tonal quality to these modern works. It can be said that the excellence of Kaufman's playing helped to bring many modern compositions into the permanent repertoire.

Kaufman is presently supervising the reissue of many of his recordings of modern violin works on compact disc and is writing his autobiography.

Louis Kaufman is another example of an outstandingly talented artist who made very few records for Edison. Kaufman made his recordings for Edison while still a student in 1927. He remembers that Edison was unhappy with his playing because of a "marked quivering" which his vibrato impressed into the groove. Vibrato is a tonal effect that the violinist creates by vibrating a finger of the left hand when it is pressed upon the string. This vibration creates a wavering of tone which is similar to that of a singer when vibrating a note. Edison, who was nearly deaf at the time and unschooled in violin technique, believed these vibrato impressions were the result of a weak or faulty bow arm. Kaufman was never again to record for Edison owing to this perceived "defect."



Kaufman was not the only violinist that Edison erroneously thought suffered from "a weak bow arm". Samuel Gardner reported that Edison asked him to evaluate recordings by Flesch and Spalding. Edison is reported to have claimed, "Those fiddlers don't know how to draw a steady bow." Gardner listened to their recordings and reported to Edison that they were excellent and was horrified to learn that Edison's evaluation of them was strictly the result of microscopic analysis of the record grooves.

Edison went so far as to have Gardner make test recordings without vibrato!! The results were predictably poor, but Edison was very pleased, and much to Gardner's dismay, offered to issue the record to the public. Fortunately, they were never issued.

The following recordings by Louis Kaufman on Edison Records were issued:

Diamond Disc/cylinder

Dowling, <u>Little Log Cabin of Dreams</u> (1927)	52301	
Wayne, <u>Ramona</u> (1927)	52301	5537



## "INDESTRUCTIBLE"

### The Toughest Record Ever Made

L. Brevoort Odell

Some years ago a little boy we knew came to our door holding something in his hand. "I found this under the porch of the old abandoned house. You collect them, don't you?"

I had immediately recognized it as a mud-crusted Indestructible Record. I thanked him and took it. Cleaning the record that had the dirt of ages on it, it proved to be #1378 - "Play That Lovey Dove Waltz Some More", sung by Collins and Harlan. Putting it on the phonograph to play, it came out loud and clear, as good as the day on which it was made! There was the record exposed to the elements for possibly fifty or more years playing like new. Such toughness!

You probably know how they were constructed, but perhaps a description is in order. The Indestructible had a shell of rugged celluloid lined with heavy cardboard, reinforced at the ends with rims of gun metal. They would stand 5000 playings without wear, according to an advertisement speaking of them as "A scientific search". They were made by the Indestructible Phonographic Record Company in Albany, New York, starting approximately in 1907 to 1920 or 1921. In all, some 1500 selections were made: two-minutes first and then four-minutes starting in January 1910. The two-minutes were made until 1917 or 1918, but the four-minutes were kept on until Indestructible went out of business.

There is a "fly in the ointment" however. Although I have seldom found an Indestructible beyond saving, some had the cardboard liner swollen, but usually it could be filed out a bit enabling the record to be put on the mandrel. Some were badly scratched, but the real fly relates to a down-grade in manufacturing. The early rugged celluloid shell was cheapened to a thinner shell, and the records were not pressed with deep enough grooves, thus causing skipping, especially on the four-minute records. On the latter two-minute records, you can not rely on the name of the singer printed on the record, as it may be marked "Burr" or "Harrison" and be sung by an unknown person.

According to a story told me by James Van Demark, an ardent collector, sometime in the 1920's he passed by a building that was being torn down in Albany, and amidst the rubble there were hundreds of Indestructible Records. He picked up some and they were unhurt! Another evidence of their sturdiness. The building, Jim thought, must have been the factory of Indestructible.

My introduction to the Indestructibles was in the very Columbia store in Pittsburgh where my mother and I worked in 1919-20. My "introduction" was when I was less than four years old, probably in 1909. We were going to buy some wax Columbia Records, and knew they were fragile like our Edisons. The owner, a Mr. Henck, took a record from the shelf and threw it forcefully onto the floor. We were shocked, but he smiled and picked it up unharmed. "This is our new Columbia Indestructible Record", he said. Columbia had taken over the distributorship of the Indestructibles and boxed them as "Columbia Indestructible Record". For some years I knew them as Columbia Records. However, I soon learned that Sears-Roebuck marketed them as "Oxford" records, the same name they had used for wax Columbias.

Columbia had seemingly tried to make a celluloid record from their wax masters, if a record that I have in my collection is a sample. It will not track, so it must have been an unsuccessful effort.

The remainder of Columbia's wax records were sold off in the "5 and 10¢ stores". I remember my parents buying me some at 10¢ each. The records were spread out on a counter with a machine for you to listen to the records you selected. Imagine this courtesy to-day.

Columbia gave up distributorship sometime in 1912. This was at about #1500 on two-minute and #3270 on four-minute records.

It appears that Indestructible bought out U.S. Everlasting Record Company as some Indestructibles, around #3280, were pressed from U.S. Everlasting masters as both makes have the Everlasting matrix number on them and are identical recordings. Indestructible's later records and reprints of early ones were boxed as "Everlasting Indestructible Record", a trade name of "Everlasting" that belonged to U.S. Everlasting.

On later pressings of Indestructibles and all U.S. Everlasting, I suggest lifting up the reproducer half way through the record when playing them, then setting it down again to compensate for any groove shrinkage or poor grooving. This will save wear on skipping and help proper tracking.

As to window advertising of the "New Columbia Indestructible Records", it was a common practice of dealers, but it became personal to me. I had operated my little Edison "Gem" from a very early age. Our maid had called to my mother quite alarmed, "The baby is playing the phonograph!" My mother replied that all I could do was to break a record, "And if so, his father will buy him another". So, when we became acquainted with the Indestructibles, they were just the thing for baby hands.

Mr. Henck wanted me to stand in his large store window and demonstrate the unbreakable quality of the Indestructibles. But, alas, my parents did not want their son of less than four years of age exploited. So you see, I suffered the pangs of unemployment! Woe was I!

Note #1: Dr. Duane D. Deakins' catalogue of 1960 lists all of the Indestructible Records, starting at #575 then skipping to #602 and going on to 1574 on two-minutes; and from 3002 to 3524 on four-minutes. However, I have two-minute #473 as the lowest number. The record has no name printed on it but is "Anitra's Dance" by Grieg. Perhaps other collectors can give more information on the gap in two-minute numbers.

Note #2 on James Van Demark: In the 1920's, James Van Demark had 79 Blue Amberols made by Edison from wax masters. These unique Blue Amberols came near to being disregarded. In his later widowing days, the widow of a minister "finagled" Jim, who had become non compos mentis, to marry her. She had no regard for him or the value of his treasures; only his "cash". My wife and I urged her to give Jim's records to the Edison Foundation of the Syracuse University, where our friend, Walter Welch, was curator. She finally yielded, and so these unique Blue Amberols are in the right hands. Walter Welch is well known for his book From Tinfoil to Stereo. He founded the Edison Foundation and credits me as having "opened" his eyes to the value of the cylinders.

+ + + + +

Mr. Odell's inaugural article for the GRAPHIC appeared in our last issue. He can be reached by writing him at P.O. Box 234, Branchville, NJ 07826.

+ + + + +

At right, a Columbia advertisement from 1910...perhaps inspired by one of Mr. Odell's childhood friends!



# COLUMBIA



## INDESTRUCTIBLE

### RECORDS FOR PHONOGRAPHS AND GRAPHOPHONES

If you own a Columbia Cylinder Graphophone (or an Edison phonograph) get *one* Indestructible Record from your dealer.

Or let us mail one to you:—35 cents, prepaid, and a catalog with it.

Lend it to the youngsters. Toss it on the table. Drop it on the floor. Kick it across the room. Leave it in the sun. Then play it and hear a finer, clearer, purer, stronger reproduction—better music in every way—than your machine ever gave out before. Play it every day for ten years and you will still have it, good as new.

Almost too good to be true? Try it! Prove it! Risk your 35 cents.

**Just Out!—The first numbers of a new line of  
4-MINUTE INDESTRUCTIBLE RECORDS 50c.**

Fit any Columbia or Edison machine that has the new 200-thread attachment. Play the complete selection—from 4 to 5 minutes. The only "4 minute" records that are *right!*



Columbia Phonograph Company, Gen'l,  
Manufacturers of Disc and Cylinder Grapho-  
phones—\$20. to \$200. Double-  
Disc and Indestructible  
Cylinder Records.

Dept. X, Tribune Building, New York  
Prices in Canada plus duty.  
Address, Confederation Life Bldg., Toronto.  
**DEALERS WANTED**—Exclusive selling rights  
granted where we are not properly represented.





## A Design For The Whitewater Gorge, Richmond, Indiana

Nancy Stanley of Richmond, Indiana, tells us there is an ambitious project currently underway to design new uses for the Whitewater Gorge, which passes through Richmond. One of the significant sites in the Gorge, which will be incorporated into the design, is what's left of the old Starr Piano factory. Most of the buildings lie in ruins, though the smokestack and a painted "Gennett Record" sign still remain. A green area and a new sculpture entitled "Jazz" are contemplated for this section. It is hoped that the entire gorge area will be accessed by a vintage steam train and electric trolley car.

Readers who wish to make contributions to the Starr-Gennett portion of the project, or who wish to obtain more information first, may contact: Sam Meier, 309 So. "B" Street, Richmond, Indiana 47374. In the meantime, we present their excellent history of the Starr-Gennett operation.

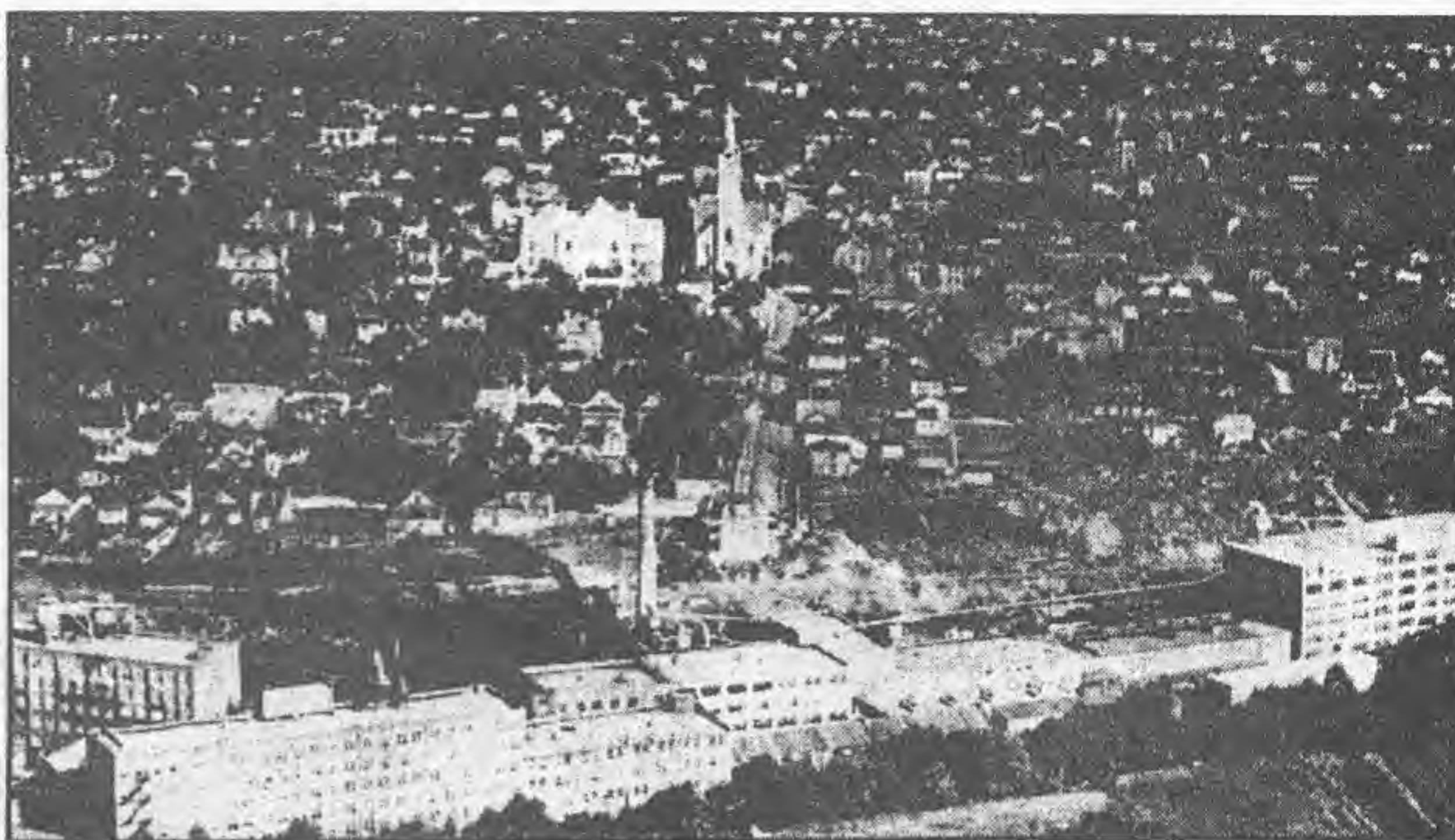
### The Starr Piano Company and Gennett Recording Industry

Of all the activity the gorge supported, the Starr Piano Company was the most significant. When the first piano craftsmen arrived in Richmond in 1872, the city had two banks, a public library, and gas lighting. The next year, when the first piano was produced, Richmond became the county seat of Wayne County, and had a population of 10,000.

The piano factory was known under several names in its early years, but the Starr family backed the enterprise from its inception. By 1878, James and Benjamin Starr, together with a piano craftsman and creative genius named Chase, had incorporated their piano works. In that year, the company purchased the present site, on the finest waterpower on the Whitewater.

In 1893, the Starr Piano received national recognition at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The same year, the Company was incorporated anew with Benjamin Starr as president and Henry Gennett as the secretary-treasurer. The arrival of Gennett and his entrepreneurial skill gave a much-needed spark (boost) to the Company. By 1906, the Starr Piano Co. had 600 employees.

In 1916, a six-story building for the manufacture of phonographs and records was erected. Over the years, the Starr Piano, Phonograph and Gennett Records were joined by Starr Refrigerators and freezers, synchronizer units designed for use with talking picture projection machines, wooden propellers and a valve for barrage balloons during World War I, wooden cabinets for radios and even wooden billy-clubs to quiet a local factory strike. No such labor disputes occurred at the Starr, as most of the craftsmen considered themselves employed for life. By the 1920s, the Starr was a broadbased musical em-



An aerial view of the Starr-Gennett Complex, probably mid-20s. Palladium-Item photo.

pire flourishing in the gorge on South 1st Street.

The recording business had been dominated from its beginning by large firms which held valuable patents on wax engraving methods and on the recording stylus. Since 1902, the American Graphophone Company (Columbia) and the Victor Talking Machine Co. had pooled their patents on the lateral cut method of recording in an attempt to monopolize the market. The majors were challenged by a growing number of smaller manufacturers, including Vocalion, Emerson, Brunswick and Starr. The giants sought protection in the courts, and in Victor Talking Machine Co. vs. Starr Piano Co. (1922) the Second Circuit Court of Appeals held the Victor patent void for lack of invention and for abandonment.

Not only did the lawsuit effectively end the majors monopolization of lateral recording, it formed a bond between the smaller companies which had joined the Gennetts in the legal battle. Leasing arrangements between the companies followed, eventually involving hundreds of Gennett masters. In the mid-twenties, Gennett was producing 3 million records annually, in addition to 15,000 pianos and 35,000 spring-driven phonographs. In 1928, Gennett cut 1,250 master records, compared to Victor's 1,900.



The Miami Lucky Seven recording in the Gennett Studio in 1922. Photograph courtesy of Duncan Schiedt.

Of the many exploits of Gennett, none was so noteworthy or important as the music recorded at the Gennett recording department.

Located at the southern end of the Starr complex, all recording activity frequently had to cease as boxcars would rumble by the recording studio. Over the period from 1916 to 1934, the Richmond studio made thousands of acoustic and electric recordings, featuring blues, jazz, country, ethnic, classical, spoken word, and any other recorded sound that had or could have a market.

A list of famous names who recorded for Gennett, in Richmond and at their studio in New York, is a long one. In 1922, the Friars Society Orchestra (later the New Orleans Rhythm Kings) made their first recordings in Richmond. The following year, 1923, Jelly Roll Morton waxed some records reaching over 20 masters in one day — an astounding feat for that time or any other. He also participated in the first interracial recording session with NORK, the same year King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band with Louis Armstrong, Lil Hardin and Honore Dutrey performed before the acoustic horn. In 1924, Bix Beiderbeck made the first of several appearances for Gennett, with the Wolverines, and later as the leader of Bix and his Rhythm Jugglers, featuring Tommy Dorsey on the trombone. Hoagy Carmichael, a fan of the NORK, and Bix also performed in Richmond with Bix, Hitch's Happy Harmonists, and as leader of Carmichael's Collegians, recording the first version of "Stardust." Earl Hines was there, in Lois Deppe's band, as was Muggsy Spanier, with the Bucktown Five, Red Nichols, Billy Butterfield, Mary Lou Williams and a wonderful musical personality who worked both sides of the street. He made religious recordings under the name of Rev. Thomas A. Dorsey; for pop recordings, his name was Thomas Dorsey, and for Jug Bands, it was Georgia Tom.

Wingy Manone, a fine trumpet player from New Orleans, came to Richmond in the summer of 1930 to record under the name "Barbecue Joe and his Hot Dogs." One of the tunes he recorded



## FROM THE EDISON VAULT

### Re-Entry Considered

by Ray Wile

Many years ago when Norman Speiden and Harold Anderson were alive and still connected with the Edison National Historic Site, mention was made to me of an occasion when the management of Thomas A. Edison, Inc. toyed with the idea of resuming the record business. Both Harold and Norman are now gone and the probability is that it might be years, if ever, before anyone stumbled on the documents we are reproducing. My memory is getting somewhat bad, so I am not certain if the cost figure submitted by the investigators was \$50,000 or \$60,000 to again produce recordings. Too bad they didn't -- many fascinating records might have again seen the light of day.

Important! Be sure to see the "Special Challenge" at the end of this article.

February 20, 1939

Mr. C. S. Williams, Jr.

At your suggestion, I have made a brief investigation of the technique and facilities required for regular production of disc records. From what I have been able to learn, there are no great changes in the processing of such records as now carried out, compared with that which we practiced in this plant up to 1930. There have been a few refinements which would involve some experimental work on our part, but this should not be a major consideration.

We have practically no production facilities left for the making of such records, except for one sample of each unit involved. If we were to embark in the business, it would be necessary to obtain a considerable number of plating baths, a few lathes for machine work on the Masters, and a number of hydraulic presses for making the actual records. I have made no attempt to investigate the cost of these items.

As to personnel, Mr. Kasacove, who developed all our better plating methods, is still in the company and is therefore available. This part of the work is the most critical and most important. The man who had charge of the machining operations has since died, but I understand that Mr. Tunstead who, I believe, is available, is entirely familiar with that phase of the work. The record pressing was under the direction of Mr. Richard Hopkins who is no longer connected with the company. However, I have the impression that he would be readily available if wanted.

O. M. Dunning

March 20, 1939

Mr. C. S. Williams, Jr.-

With Mr. Spieden's assistance, I have checked the Edison masters which are still in the record vault. These appear to be in perfect condition. If pressings were to be made, it would of course be ne-

cessary to remove the plated covering which is now on the masters and plate on that covering a stamper from which actual pressings could be made. Mr. Spieden has also succeeded in locating a complete reference list by which the location of the master corresponding to any catalog number record can be found.

I have been considering the possibilities in the setting up of a small record pressing department. Pressings made from our masters would have only two conceivable uses. The first of these is the broad one of entertainment for which the records were originally made. It is immediately obvious that none of our masters would be worthwhile to produce records directly for this purpose. The records made from them would be very poor as compared with modern radio quality and also as compared with modern electrical recordings. Moreover, since the vast bulk of our records are hill and dale, reproducing instruments for them are not generally available. The small number of lateral records which were made were, with the exception of six records, recordings of popular music of the day which is valueless now.

Hill and dale records are poor judged by modern standards because of high surface noise, because of poor instrumental accompaniments, and because of insufficient frequency range. The first of these difficulties might possibly be overcome by the use of Vinyl Acetate for pressings. However, this would have to be tried before any assurance could be obtained that reduced surface noise would result, since some of the surface noise may be present in the masters themselves. The lack of good instrumental accompaniment is largely due to the mechanical recording process in which it was physically impossible to get more than one or two persons sufficiently close to the recording horn to do a good job. The third difficulty, that of insufficient frequency range, was also due to mechanical recording which is subject to limitations not found in electrical recording.

For these reasons, I think it is obvious that our collection of master records has no substantial entertainment value in its present form. In the case of vocal or solo instrumental records, the lack of wide frequency range is not so important. For these, it might be possible to overcome the poor accompaniment by re-recording from presses made from our original masters with a new accompaniment which is keyed in, provided the surface noise is sufficiently low. After considering the equipment for doing this, as well as the artistry involved in it, it seems to me that such a process would cost us as much as though we had \_\_\_\_\_ a new master directly. The technique of doing this would undoubtedly be rather difficult, so that more time would have to be spent in actually getting the record than if the artist were present in person. Moreover, it would still be necessary to pay an orchestra and to pay royalties on the records to the original performer or his estate.\*

The other possible use for pressings from our masters would be for collectors of whom there are considerable number. A little investigation has indicated that the going price in collectors' shops for Edison hill and dale records of good artists is approximately twenty-five cents. Undoubtedly, new records with lower surface noise would bring a somewhat higher rate, but I doubt whether we could get a price ap-

\*Evidently Mr. Dunning was not aware that RCA Victor had employed this very same technique almost a decade earlier with their Caruso re-recordings. A few words from this paragraph were obscured in the original copy. We have transcribed Mr. Speiden's name as it is spelled in this letter. -Ed.



proximating that for new records. As a matter of fact, my impression of the Edison record catalog seems to indicate that we had very few "big name" artists whose records would of course be in the greatest demand by collectors. Certainly our artist list does not compare with Victor's in this respect.

It also seems obvious to me that any record manufacturing venture which we might set up on a small basis would result in records which had a higher unit cost than the records which we made when we had quantity production. In addition, we would have to spend a considerable sum to set up to operate even on a small basis.

I have therefore come inevitably to the conclusion that there is probably no possibility of our utilizing our stock of master records in any self-supporting venture at present.

O. M. Dunning

### Special Challenge!

What if the Edison company had re-entered the record business? What would their new label have looked like?? We invite our many talented readers to submit their concept of the 1939 Edison label design. We will illustrate all entries in the next issue and ask readers to choose the one they like best. Readers may submit more than one design, and all original artwork will be returned. A prize will be awarded to the winner, so let's get busy with the pen and ink!



(Do you have yours yet? See advertising section!)

### More Rare Photos From the Edison Plant

Ron Dethlefsen

(Note: All photos are from the collection of Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village and are printed with their permission.)

We present four more fascinating photos, all from the Blue Amberol press room at the Edison factory at West Orange. These photos were taken in August of 1929, shortly before the equipment was dismantled and shipped to the Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

#### Photo #1

Blue Amberol presses, which sat in front of the drying ovens. Only one example of these survives at the

Ford Museum. Levers locked steel mould shells containing celluloid blanks into presses. Then steam was applied to soften the blanks, and then air was introduced to press the blanks into the walls of the moulds to take the impressions of the grooves.

According to Theodore Edison (in an interview in June 1985 at Llewellyn Park, N.J.), each mould contained a rubber "inner tube" that was inflated by the air pressure and it expanded to force the blank into the mould walls. Mr. Edison told me that a common problem was "blow outs", as the rubber "inner tube" aged through repeated press runs. Note large air compressor to the rear of the presses.

Also note the hour glasses on the two vertical main steam pipes above the large valves. These acted as timing devices for the press runs. Steam was applied for 1½ min., then air for pressing and cooling of the mould. See Edison Blue Amberol Recordings, 1912-14 page 202 for more details.

#### Photo #2

Press room, opposite end of the room from the section shown on page 15 of GRAPHIC #80. In foreground are carrying pans for cylinders. Note cylinders in second pan. I suspect that freshly-pressed cylinders were placed in these pans and then were taken to the backing machine, also in the foreground. After backing with plaster-of-paris, the cylinders were returned to the pans and taken to the drying ovens, which form the white or silvery wall in the upper right background. Note what must be hundreds of cylinders in wooden crates in center background!

#### Photo #3

This photo shows the packing area, which was located at the right rear of photo no. 2 (notice the right edge of the drying ovens, as well as the same ladder reaching to an overhead beam). This is where your cylinders began their long journey to you; both views were on the fifth floor of the Edison record plant.

In the center of the room is the large wooden hopper, which was filled with empty Blue Amberol boxes. The boxes were gravity-fed through an opening on the other side of the hopper where workers inserted cylinder records. The area to the left of the hopper contains stacks of paper goods, probably labels and boxes.

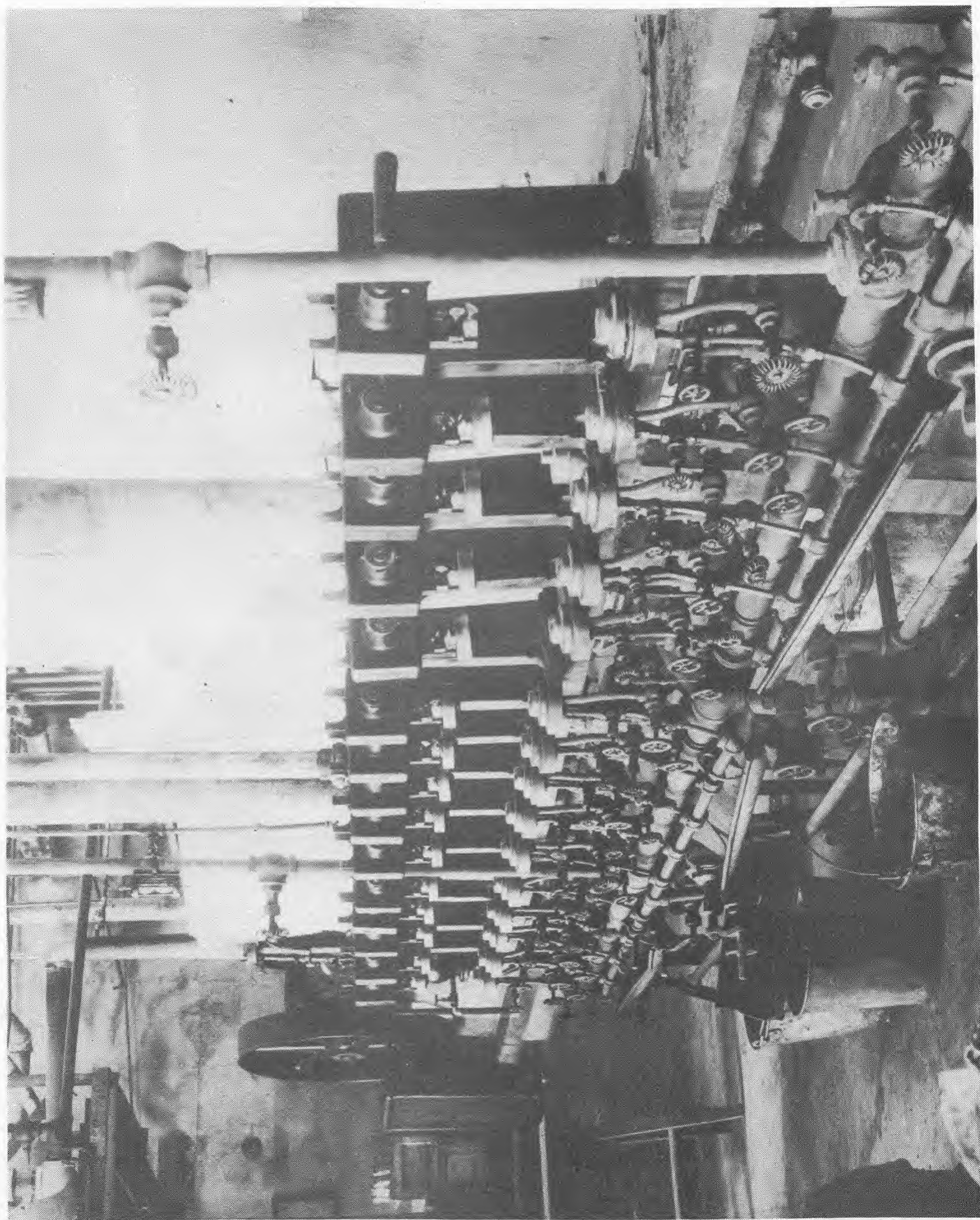
In the right foreground we see more of the metal baking trays with wire inserts. On the far left we see yet another wooden crate of loose Blue Amberol records. Barely visible behind the two vertical poles is the label rack, containing stacks of lid labels in pigeon holes.

(This photo originally appeared in the July, 1991 Michigan Antique Phonograph Society's newsletter.)

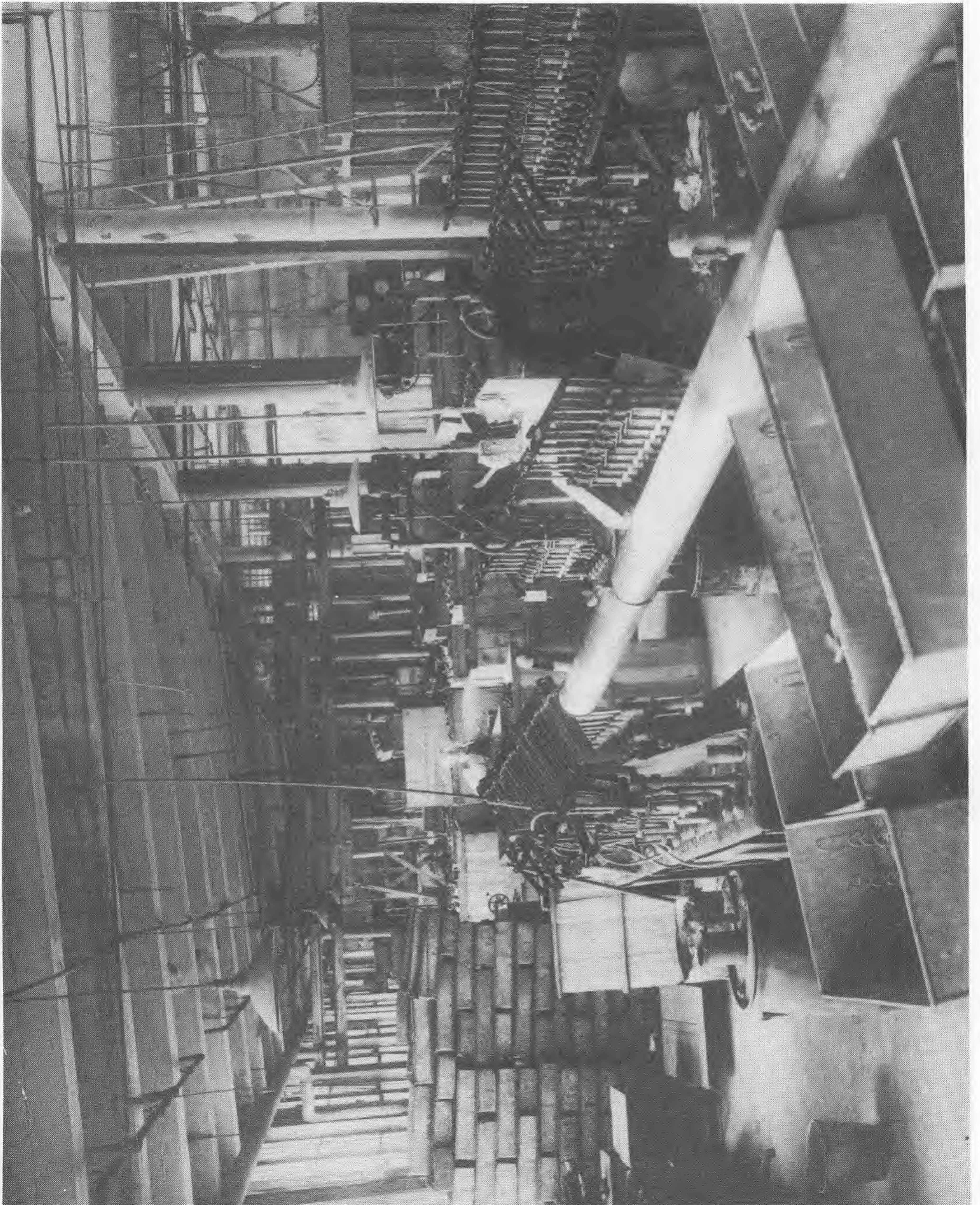
#### Photo #4

Close-up view of the backing plungers. There was a pouring pot for the plaster-of-paris which was operated by 10 lbs. of air pressure to force the plaster into the hollow Blue Amberol sleeves. According to Howard Miller's description on page 202 of Edison Blue Amberol Recordings, 1912-14, it took 6-8 minutes for the plaster to set so that the plunger could be extracted. Then the machine was cleaned and the plunger was greased with Vaseline to get it ready for the next record. The back records were then dried in the ovens for 24 hours at 200° F. Finally, they were reamed to the proper taper.

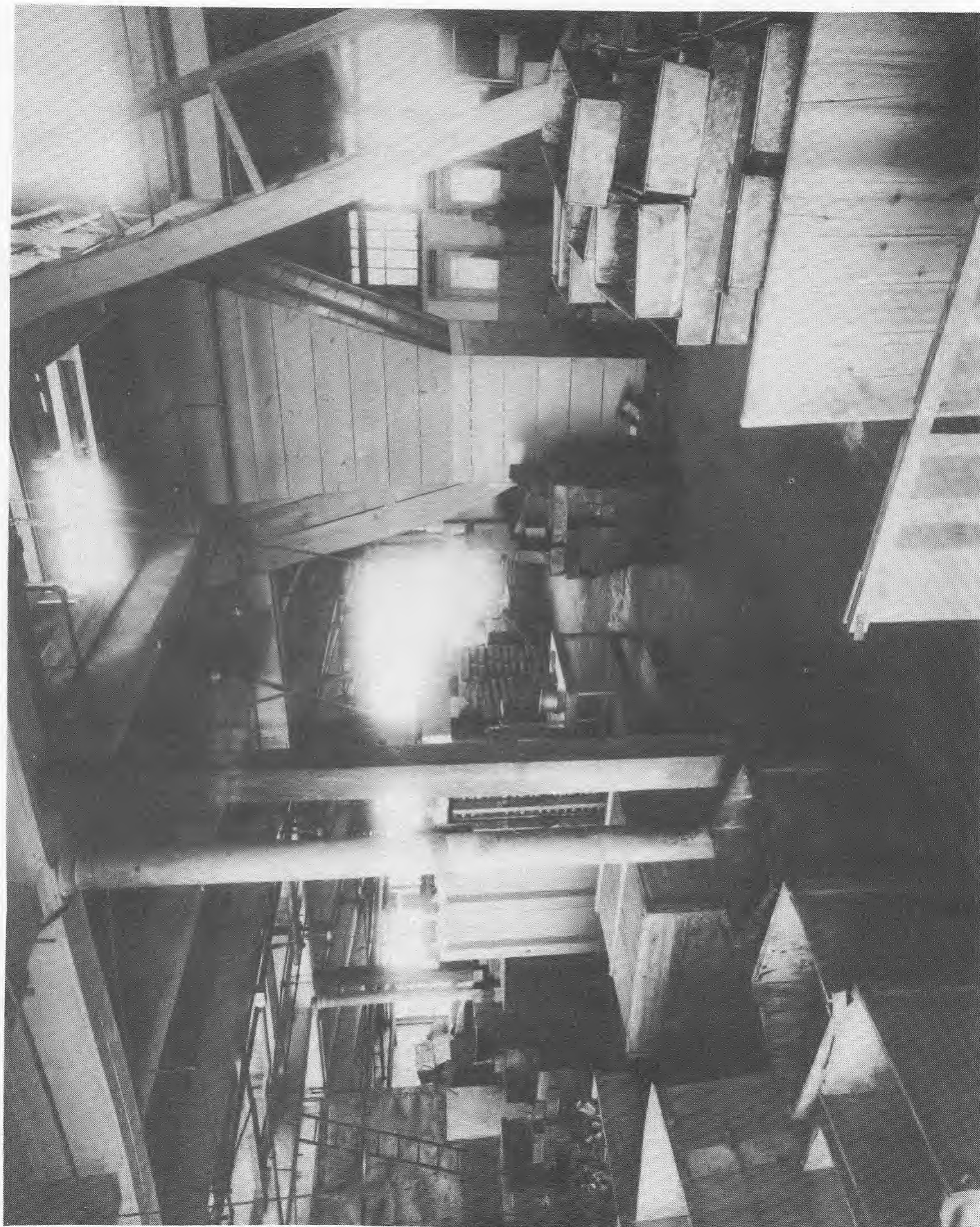


















Talking Machine World and  
Radio-Music Merchant  
August 29, 1929

## Merger of Phonograph Record Manufacturers

**American Record Corp. Formed by Merger of Scranton Button Co., Scranton, and Regal and Cameo Companies, New York**

A merger has been arranged between the Scranton Button Co., of Scranton, Pa., the Regal Record Co., of New York, and the Cameo Record Corp., of New York, which will, when completed, result in the formation of a \$9,000,000 holding company to be called The American Record Corp.

Louis G. Sylvester, of the Scranton Button Co., will be the president of the new company, the other directors being C. J. Kronberg and H. Germain, of the Regal Record Co.; James and Roy MacPherson, of the Cameo Record Corp.; D. Warnford-Davis, of the Crystalate Gramophone Co., of London, England, and three other members of the board of the Scranton Button Co. The three companies will continue to operate as separate units, the Scranton Button Co. manufacturing the records and the Regal and Cameo handling the recording and sales departments. Manufacturing plants will be at Scranton, Pa., Auburn, N. Y., Framingham, Mass., and Glendale, Calif.

The Regal Record Co. is owned by the Crystalate Gramophone Record Mfg. Co., Ltd., of London, Eng. This unites three of the largest factors in the popular-priced record field.

This formation operated as separate units, Scranton Button pressing the records while Regal and Cameo handled their own recordings and sales. Crystalate was the British outlet for all ARC recordings in the U.K. ARC concentrated on the five and ten cent stores and mail order sales at a time when records by Victor, Brunswick and Columbia were selling at seventy-five cents each. The ARC "Popular Priced" records were selling at twenty-five to thirty-five cents, with Pathé selling at fifty-five cents. The record business in 1930, along with the rest of the country, was in depression. In October Consolidated Film Industries (an independent motion picture processing laboratory headed by Herbert Yates, who also controlled several motion picture production companies which were acquired partly by taking them over when they failed to pay their processing bills) acquired ARC in exchange for 124,973 shares of CFI stock. James MacPherson, a director of ARC, continued in that capacity as a director with CFI. The inducement for CFI to acquire ARC was similar to that of Warner Bros. Pictures, which purchased the Brunswick record business to insure a supply of industrial records which at the time were synchronized to motion picture projectors providing sound with movies in a number of theaters for theatrical exhibition.

In April 1930, Warner Bros. purchased the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company's musical division, which included phonographs and records, and formed the Brunswick Radio Corporation. By the end of 1931, Warner Bros. wanted out of the commercial record business and on December 3, 1931 signed a sales agreement with ARC to continue to record, market and press the commercial Brunswick label as the Brunswick Record Corp. for approximately ten years. The Brunswick Radio Corp. under Warner Bros. continued the business of industrial records mostly for radio broadcasting



## THE AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION (A Corporate Overview)

The American Record Corporation (ARC) was founded in 1929 by a merger of three companies. One was a manufacturer of various items derived from shellac and natural bitumens, the other two were minor label record companies. In 1930 ARC was acquired by Consolidated Film Industries (CFI) which continued the process of expansion and amalgamation, resulting in an outstanding roster of recording artists. In 1938 the ARC was sold to the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). This sale provided CBS with recording, manufacturing and distributing capability second to RCA Victor. CBS changed the corporate name to Columbia Recording Corporation which for fifty years flourished and in 1988 was sold to the SONY Corp. The ARC was an education in corporate acquisition and affiliation. The following is not a detailed account of ARC's history. In reviewing clippings, trade journals and books, as well as listening to record producers and speaking with collectors, I feel that a general corporate outline would be of value to current discographers and collectors.

From its incorporation in July 1929 to its sale in December 1938, the American Record Corporation had a complex corporate development. It was the result of a merger of the Scranton Button Company of Scranton, Pennsylvania, Cameo Record Corp. of New York and the Regal Record Company of New York. Regal was in turn owned by the Crystalate Gramophone Record Mfg. Co. Ltd. of London, England and associated with the Plaza Music Company. Scranton Button was the cornerstone of ARC. It was established in 1885 as a manufacturer of products derived from shellac compounds, which in later years devoted a section of its capacity to pressing phonograph records. Cameo was headed by James MacPherson, who was also president of the Pathé Phonograph & Radio Corp. which included the Perfect label. Louis G. Sylvester, president of Scranton Button, was named president of ARC. The directors were Messrs. Kronberg and Germain of Regal, James & Roy MacPherson of Cameo and Pathé, Warnford-Davis of Crystalate, plus three other additional members from Scranton Button.



# EMERSON SOLVES THE PROBLEM

Emerson Records Now Distributed Exclusively By Jobbers

Dealers can now get quick service on popular price, nationally known Emerson records at regular dealers' discount.

## *Emerson Records*

**Standard Retail Price, 50 cents**

The Scranton Button Co., Scranton, Pa., an institution of the highest financial standing, is back of the name Emerson and is now the complete manufacturer of Emerson Records—recording, plating, pressing.



THE HOME OF EMERSON RECORDS

LATEST SONGS  
STANDARD  
OPERATIC  
RACE  
SACRED



DANCE HITS  
HAWAIIAN  
NOVELTY  
COMEDY  
FOREIGN

Over 100,000,000 Emerson Records have been sold. The name Emerson is one of the most widely known in the record field.

NOTED ARTISTS—COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGS

**JOBBER:**

*Franchises in exclusive territory open—Write for full particulars.*

## *Emerson Radio and Phonograph Corporation*

sole sales agents for Emerson Records throughout the world

**307-309 Sixth Avenue**

**New York City**

The cornerstone of the formation of the American Record Corporation was the Scranton Button Company, now defunct, which was established in 1885 as a manufacturer of buttons, buckles, insulating parts made from shellac compounds, novelties and in later years a pressing plant for phonograph records. They are shown here in the December, 1924 Talking Machine World ad for Emerson.



under the Brunswick label. This deal gave ARC, for the first time, a major label and a roster of artists which included the leading crooner of that time, Bing Crosby.

In 1934, the Columbia Phonograph Company, owned by the Grigsby-Grunow Company (a radio and refrigerator appliance manufacturer), was in bankruptcy. ARC purchased Columbia which included the Okeh label from the bankruptcy court for \$70,500.00. This purchase put ARC in the popular record field on an equal footing with Victor. This same year Decca Records, Inc., a new company financed by English Decca, was able, through Jack Kapp, president of Decca Records and a former Columbia and Brunswick executive, to acquire a roster of Brunswick artists headed by Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo. Crosby at this time was still the leading crooner of movies, radio and records.

## AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION

World's Largest Manufacturers of Popular Priced Records

**NOW OFFERS  
FOR THE FIRST  
TIME ON**

**25c.** Phonograph  
Records

*Today's Best Selling Artist*

**RUTH ETTING**

Celebrated Screen, Vaudeville and Radio Star

*Write for our special proposition for Dealers*

## AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION

World's Largest Manufacturers of Popular Priced Records

### MANUFACTURERS OF

BANNER  
PERFECT  
REGAL  
ROMEO

and other well-known records.

Also

Pregrooved Home  
Recording Discs.

### Consolidation of

The Scranton Button Company  
Regal Record Co.  
Cameo Record Corporation  
Factory: Scranton, Pa.  
Chicago Office and Distributing  
Depot: 729 S. Wabash Ave.

**RECORDING  
LABORATORIES**  
and Executive Headquarters  
1776 Broadway, New York

### Electrical Transcription Division

Complete facilities for  
the production of  
spot broadcasting records  
16" and 12"—  
33 1/3 or 78 R.P.M.

A rare 1931 ad to the trade announcing the acquisition of Ruth Etting as an ARC artist.

In 1938 the Columbia Broadcasting System was interested in acquiring an electrical transcription company. It owned a concert booking business and wanted a link between radio, transcription recording and pressing. RCA Victor had this linkage in place. Originally CBS intended to purchase only the Columbia label from ARC, but Herbert Yates put a \$700,000.00 tag for the total ARC empire and William Paley, C.E.O. of CBS, took the offer; CBS purchased the American Record Corporation from Consolidated Film Industries in December 1938, thereby acquiring the finest non-classical record library in the world. James MacPherson, still a director of CFI, remained with CFI after the

*The* **NEW Electrographic Process**

# PERFECT

**Record**

CHICK BULLOCK  
CAB CALLOWAY  
ROY SCHEEK  
RUTH ETTING  
ANNETTE HANSHAW  
WILL OSBORNE  
MORTON DOWNEY

**AMERICA'S FASTEST SELLING RECORD**  
PRODUCT OF AMERICAN RECORD CORPORATION

Perfect was perhaps the most successful of all ARC labels during the Depression years, and one of the few to acknowledge it was an ARC product.

sale. CBS immediately terminated the five chain store economy records (Perfect, Romeo, Oriole, Banner & Melotone) for its own account\* and formed the Columbia recording Corp., also terminating the American Record Corporation as a corporate entity. Subsequently, and from time to time, Columbia may have used some of these labels on an intermittent basis. They also gave prominence to the Columbia label while relegating the Brunswick label from its former flagship label status under ARC.

Jack Kapp enjoyed a close relationship with Herman Starr, former president of Brunswick Radio Corp. and head of the Warner Bros. Pictures movie music operation. Starr was Kapp's boss at Brunswick Radio in 1930, and Kapp was aware of the details of the Brunswick Radio Corp./Brunswick Record Corp. sales agreement which terminated in 1941. A deal was made in May 1941, and Decca Records, Inc. purchased the Brunswick Radio Corp. from Warner Bros. Pictures which included all Brunswick recordings from 1920 to December 3, 1931 going to Decca Records, including the Brunswick label trade mark. All post-December 3, 1931 ARC-Brunswick Record Corp. recordings remained with Columbia Records, less the Brunswick trade mark.\*\*

In 1988, fifty years later, CBS sold Columbia Records, Inc. (formerly the Columbia Recording Corporation, the name of which was changed to Columbia Records, Inc. on March 31, 1947), over the objection of William Paley, still a director of CBS but no longer its C.E.O., to the SONY Corp. for approximately \$2,000,000,000.00 in cash.

\*Editor's note: For some reason, however, Columbia Recording Corporation found it advantageous to keep its account with Sears, Roebuck & Co., and continued to press Conqueror records for them into the 1940's.

\*\*For many years collectors have wondered why some of Bing Crosby's Brunswicks were reissued by Decca on their Brunswick 80000 "Collectors Series," while others showed up reissued on green label Columbias in the -M series. This, at last, is the explana-



tion! The same dividing line (Dec. 3, 1931) appears to hold firm for all of the jazz reissues Columbia and Decca did in the 1940's from Brunswick masters.

\* \* \* \* \*

Herman Paikoff can be contacted at 10 Riverside Dr., Binghamton, New York 13905.

\* \* \* \* \*



In the latter 1940s, the American Record Corporation name was revived for a series of Special Edition reissues. Perhaps the name had never officially been removed from the CBS books for tax purposes, but it was no longer an official corporate entity.

## HERE & THERE

Have you heard about those warning stickers they're placing on recordings nowadays to warn against offensive lyrics? Here's an interesting twist to the whole idea. It seems that someone who recently recorded a CD came into Richard Gesner's shop on Manchester, N.H. promoting his recording. When asked about the warning sticker, the artist replied that they had finished making the collection when someone suggested that they do one more song and make it X-rated. The reason? To earn a warning label, thereby ensuring better sales! We find it ironic that in today's market talent and artistry are no longer sufficient to sell recordings, although new artists probably do need some sort of gimmick such as this to get their material in the public's hands.

In issue #80 we reprinted a news article about a cylinder purported to contain the voice of Walt Whitman. Subsequent to that issue, we heard a portion of the recording on a television broadcast, and we were skeptical of its authenticity. Although it had all the proper surface sound for an early wax cylinder, the voice seemed too solid and clear (almost "electrical") to be an original. Now, thanks to the research done by Allen Koenigsberg and reported in the last issue of *APM*, it seems clear that this was a hoax created many years ago by the late Roscoe Haley. We hope that Whitman scholars aren't too disappointed to discover they were hoodwinked by a fake!

The Edison National Historic Site, West Orange, New Jersey, announces that "Christmas at Glenmont" will be  
(cont. next page, bottom right)

## Edna Fischer

We are pleased to present a photo of Victor recording artist Edna Fischer, taken just after her ninetieth birthday on August 6, courtesy of reader Bill Knorp. Miss Fischer first appeared on record as accompanist to the Duncan Sisters on their 1923 recording of "I Never Had a Mammy." (Her name is sometimes misspelled as "Fisher.") In 1928 she made a pair of piano solos Orthophonically: "Rag Doll" and "The Varsity Drag" (no. 21384). Unfortunately, this was a West Coast recording and is difficult to locate elsewhere in the country.



Edna Fischer at her home in San Francisco, with friends John Goepel and Philip Johnson. Photo courtesy of Bill Knorp.

Miss Fischer is also a composer of popular music; her "Someday Soon" was recorded by the orchestras of Anson Weeks (Columbia) and Tom Gerun (Brunswick), as well as the Piccadilly Players (Edison Needle Type only). "The Dream In My Heart" was featured in the well-known NBC radio program "One Man's Family."

During the 1920s Miss Fischer worked for music publishers and appeared in vaudeville. From 1927 to 1940 she appeared on radio in solos and also duets with Newell Chase. She played with Meredith Willson's orchestra from 1930 to 1940, and also appeared with Paul Whiteman's orchestra.

We wish her a belated happy 90th birthday, and thank her for the pleasure she has given us with her songs and playing.





# Curiosity

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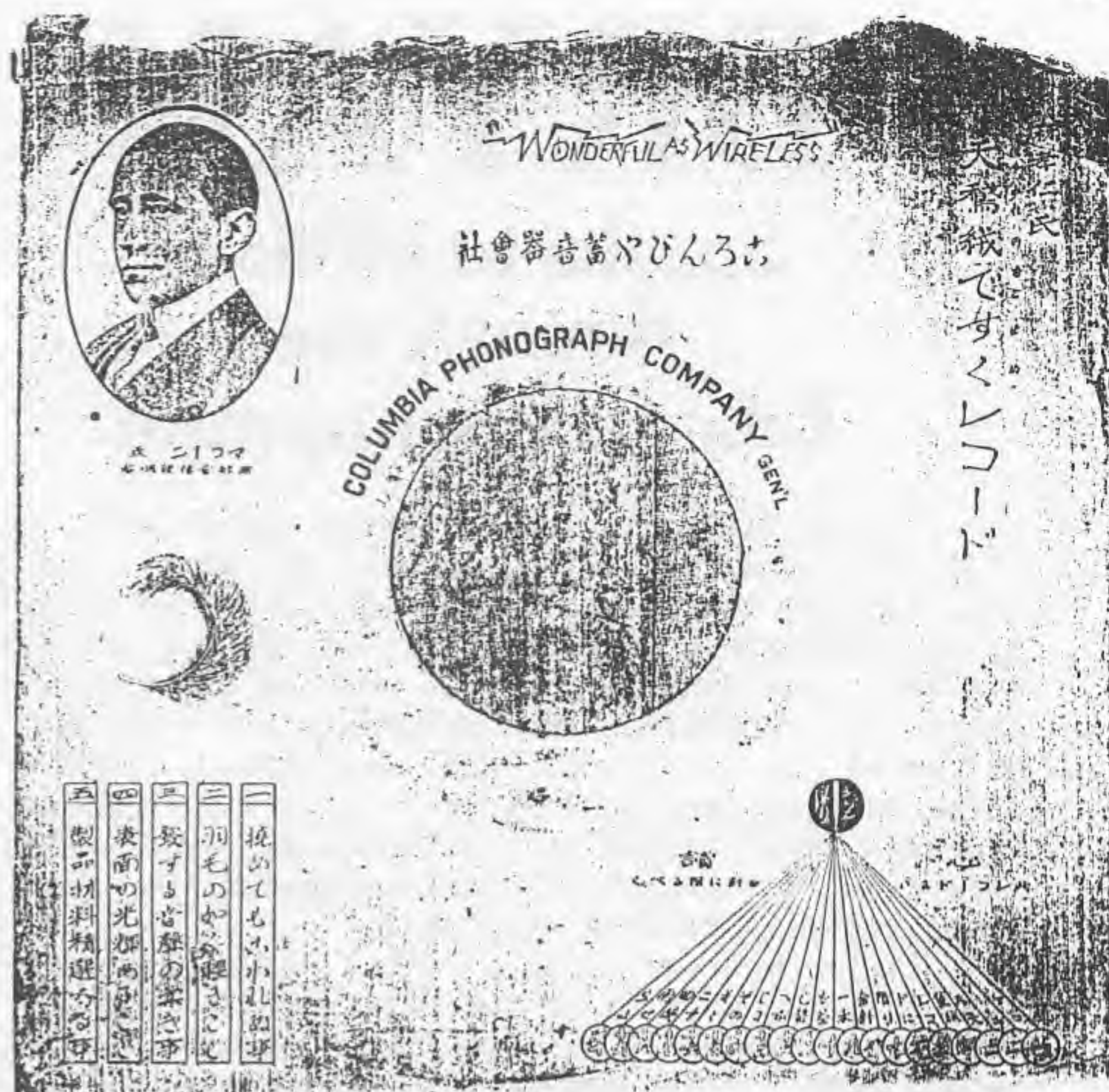
## "Marconi Around the World?"

The history of Columbia is filled with great achievements and great failures; financial successes followed by bankruptcies; innovative ideas which caught on...and some that didn't. The Marconi Velvet Tone Record is certainly one of these. The idea was new in several respects when introduced in 1907: the record was lightweight (about 2 ounces!), flexible, and practically unbreakable. It was also the first Columbia record to be manufactured with a laminated surface, and it was sold in a sleeve that had a glass-line window.

Unfortunately, the record was poorly advertised and marketed, and was eventually withdrawn from sale. One source indicates they were sold only from October to December of 1907, but the existence of double-sided Marconis suggests they lasted well into 1908. Their drawbacks were few. Standard 10" Marconis sold for 75¢, although this was just 15¢ over the regular Columbia. They required special needles; but since they could play several records before a change was needed, this should have turned to their advantage. Whatever the reasons for failure, they are curiosities which collectors of pre-1910 discs always enjoy finding.

Even more curious are the items which two of our Vermont readers have turned up. Ed Dubois has one of the rare double-faced Marconi pressings, but notice that the second side has a Spanish logo. Were these intended for export to South America? Glen Gurwit was puzzled when he found the Marconi sleeve written in Japanese. Would its label also have had a Japanese logo?

Because of these oddities, it is obvious that Columbia had set its sights on far-reaching distribution of its innovative new product. But don't forget, this was Columbia, after all...and the Marconi record was not to be the first or last idea to quietly drop out of the picture.



## MICHIGAN ANTIQUE PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

To learn more about the Michigan Antique Phonograph Society, contact: M.A.P.S., 2609 Devonshire, Lansing, MI 48910.

### THE REPRODUCER



For more information about the Vintage Radio & Phonograph Society, write: VRPS, P. O. Box 165345, Irving, TX 75016.

(cont. from previous page)

celebrated between December 2 and January 9. "Visit the home of Thomas and Mina Edison and see how they celebrated the holidays with their family." Tickets are distributed at the Site's Visitor Center on a first come, first served basis Wednesdays through Sundays. For more information call 201-736-0550.

Finally, reader David Spanovich wrote to ask if we had seen the new Hammacher Schlemmer holiday catalogue. We hadn't, and were therefore appalled to see their exclusive offer of "reconditioned" and "refurbished" Edison Standard Phonographs (complete with "reconditioned parts" and three "cylindrical record cartridges"!), for the amazing price of \$1499. David wonders how many "rich suckers who don't know any better" sprang for this rare collectable. He also passed on a little classified ad from the San Francisco Chronicle advertising a one-of-a-kind Victrola, complete with records and needles, for \$2500. He was amused to learn, after calling, that it was an ordinary VV100.



# BRYAN

## Speaks to Millions through the Edison Phonograph

By the time this issue reaches subscribers, we will already have elected our next President, and we will finally have found some relief from the candidates' tiresome advertisements. As many of our readers know, the campaign of 1908 was the first to have commercial recordings made and distributed of the voices of the two presidential candidates. Edison seems to have succeeded first in recording William Jennings Bryan; Victor and Columbia followed awhile later, and eventually all three companies had both Bryan and Taft records available.

Timing was certainly a factor in placing the records on sale, as most of the political talks would have little commercial value after the November election (although some titles were kept in the catalogues of all three companies for "historical" purposes). Columbia may well have been the last to succeed in this venture, as their Taft and Bryan records turn up less often than the Edisons and Victors.

In recognition of the current campaign season (or perhaps in spite of it!), we present two original articles on the making of the Bryan records. The first comes from the pages of The Edison Phonograph Monthly (reprints courtesy of Wendell Moore), and indicates that the recording conditions were somewhat less than ideal—can any reader confirm the presence of hammering on "The Tariff Question"?

The second article comes from a Laramie, Wyoming newspaper. It pinpoints the date of the second recording expedition (by Victor?), as well as the prices paid for the records. Note a hint of financial impropriety over the two transactions! We had to retype the text, and we regret that since receiving the article we misplaced the name of the person who provided it. We thank him, nevertheless, and perhaps we will be able to give proper credit in the next issue.

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### Edison Phonograph Monthly, July, 1908

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#### Making the Bryan Records

"When I was detailed to go to the home of William Jennings Bryan and direct the making of a series of Edison Records by Mr. Bryan, I felt a little 'shaky,'" said Harold Voorhis, of the Recording Department of the National Phonograph Co.

"If it had been a coon song, or a band piece, or a grand opera selection or all together I wouldn't have worried, for those are every-day affairs. But a trip half-way across the continent to the home of the Great Commoner was different. I don't think any one can appreciate how different without trying it themselves.

"I knew the Records were to be important ones, especially with Mr. Bryan so prominent in the Presidential campaign, and I was more than anxious to secure good results.

"I reached Lincoln, Nebraska, on a Friday morning, with my recording apparatus and a plentiful supply of wax masters. Everything had been arranged and when I got to the Bryan home I found Mr. Bryan ready for work.

"We lost no time in putting the library in shape and were soon ready to make a start. Mr. Bryan had his speeches in typewritten form, and had timed himself several times in getting them the right length. Nevertheless we found on trying the first that it was too long to get on the Record so it had to be cut down and another trial made. Mr. Bryan seemed a little nervous when he first started, much more so he said than he ever felt in facing an audience of ten thousand people.

"Considering that his words were to be reproduced all over the world in perhaps a million homes, and that it might mean a great deal to him how his speech was received, I thought he showed remarkable composure. All Record artists are very nervous on their first attempts and it usually takes a good many trials to get a good Record. Mr. Bryan had practiced a little, however, and was quickly at his ease. We kept at it pretty steadily all of Friday and Saturday mornings, and a few Records were thrown out, though not nearly so many as I expected.

"Mr. Bryan rested occasionally and several times went to his private office to dictate an important letter or two. Once his son came in for a few minutes, and on another occasion Mrs. Bryan entered. She is a charming lady and intellectually she appeared to be a fit "running mate" for the Great Commoner. I understand she is a full graduate in law. Mrs. Bryan said she liked Mr. Bryan's address on 'Immortality' best of all. It is taken from his lecture on 'The Prince of Peace.' The latter was rather long for a title, so Mr. Bryan decided to call the Record 'Immortality.'

"Some workmen who were engaged in repairing a porch annoyed us with their hammering and Mr. Bryan went out to tell them to let up for a while. He did not want to arouse their curiosity so told them he was talking into the 'phone. For all that we heard a few stray knocks later on and one or two of these were caught by the Phonograph in his speech on The Tariff Question.

"When our work was at last finished on Saturday, the library floor looked as if it had been visited by a snow storm, so thickly was it strewn with the wax shavings. I made apologies to Mrs. Bryan, which she assured me were entirely unnecessary, and as quickly as I could get my things together I was on the way back to Orange, N. J., with the Records. If I had been the bearer of the crown jewels I wouldn't have guarded them more carefully."

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# THE BOOMERANG

Established in 1881 by BILL NYE.

Published Every Evening Except Sunday and Semi-Weekly by

THE BOOMERANG CO.

## BRYAN TALKING TO PHONOGRAPHS

COMMONER SPENDS ENTIRE DAY  
MAKING SHORT SPEECHES ON  
ISSUES

Receives \$1,000 for His Labors and

Turns Whole Amount Over to

Committee

Lincoln, Neb. July 22 — Most of yesterday was spent by Bryan in delivering short speeches on the issues of the campaign into a phonograph. Previously he has made similar speeches on the records of a competing concern. The intention is to give the speeches wide distribution thro'out the country.

Of his own volition Bryan announced that he had received \$500 from each of the two concerns as compensation for his work. When confronted with the suggestion by a newspaper man that he had accepted .....-by acted contrary to the declared policy of the Democratic party, Mr. Bryan stated that the whole proposition was a commercial one, and that he very properly could accept pay for his labors.

The remittances were not retained by him, but he turned them over to the state and county Democratic committees respectively, as a personal contribution.

In another brief item in The Boomerang, we read:

### His Voice Goes With Him

From Oyster Bay comes the depressing news that Mr. Roosevelt has refused to talk into phonographs for the purpose of permitting the public in the far end of the country to hear his voice at say a tenth of a cent a word.

(Theodore Roosevelt was not a candidate in 1908, though he was President at the time.)

Finally, The Boomerang contains the following one-liner, giving no doubt as to their political leaning:

A Democrat is a man who has voted twice for Bryan and will vote for him again.

## IN REVIEW

### Unreleased EDISON Laterals I An Anthology of ELECTRICALLY RECORDED Needle Type RECORDS

Unreleased Edison Laterals I, produced by Craig Maier and Richard Carlson for Diamond Cut Productions.

What an exciting project has recently been inaugurated by Diamond Cut Productions! Their producers were involved with the re-recording of some 1200 Edison "Needle Type" test pressings for Hewlett Packard, and this collection is the first product to result. It contains 21 selections, all in the needle type format.

The eventual acceptance of standard lateral recording by Edison took over a year of experimenting and developing, and yet there isn't a single side here that couldn't have been issued. The earliest recording used dates from February 10, 1928, and it's technically and musically equal to anything then on the market. It irks me to think the company could have entered the lateral market over a year earlier than they did, but because of procrastination and indecision kept putting it off. It is quite conceivable that the Edison label might have survived past the fall of '29 as a result.

Volume I contains a well-balanced variety of the Edison repertoire, mostly from 1928. The recordings used represent thirteen different artists, such as B. A. Rolfe's Orchestra, the California Ramblers, Vaughn de Leath, the Piccadilly Players, etc. There are dance tunes such as "Sonny Boy" and "Just a Night for Meditation"; jazzy arrangements of "Deep Hollow" and "My Gal Sal"; pop songs and ballads; even a march and a concert number thrown in for good measure.

The re-recordings were all made digitally from the originals, and the level of fidelity and brilliancy brought out is quite surprising. However, a moderate amount of reverberation has been added to compensate for unevenness in surface noise. While this is acceptable with dance numbers, it can be downright aggravating with some vocal pieces. Vaughn de Leath's lovely "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" suffers the most. What should be an intimate ballad sounds as if it's being sung in a gymnasium -- an empty one, at that!

This is a collection well-worth acquiring, and the good news is that if it succeeds, more will follow. The producers are considering an all California Ramblers recordings for volume II. So, more than sixty years after being abandoned for one reason or another, these wonderful recordings may finally be made available in large numbers. For this reason alone, collectors should jump on the bandwagon and support the project.

"Unreleased Edison Laterals I" is available in either CD or cassette tape format (\$17.98 and \$11.98, respectively, postpaid; European orders should add \$2.00 additional shipping cost per copy), from Diamond Cut Productions, P.O. Box 305, Hibernia, NJ 07842.

International Discographer, Ross Laird, Editor.

From Australia comes a brand new publication dedicated, as its name implies, to various discographical research around the world. Mr. Laird has gotten off to



an excellent start with his first issue.

One of the goals of ID is to present more "in depth" research papers, discographies, etc., than are usually found in collector publications. Consequently, this first issue contains an excellent bio-discography on Pete Hampton, Laura Bowman and the Darktown Aristocrats in Europe (1904-1912). Hampton and Bowman were both Afro-American performers (Hampton appeared here in some of the Williams and Walker productions), but their recorded output was limited to various sessions in London. In fact, it is claimed that Pete Hampton made more recordings, disc and cylinder, than any other U.S. black artist during this period.

American collectors will be interested to see the beginnings of a Columbia 15000-D discography by David Crisp and a discography of West Indian recordings (1912-1945) by Dick Spottswood. There's also a discography of Capitol's 57-7000 "Sepia" series, as well as a brief discussion of sound effects and mood music recordings.



Many collectors are fascinated by the constant-speed long playing World records of the 1920s, and Chris Long presents a fine article of the World operation in Australia, including insight into the somewhat "excitable" and "impulsive" inventor, Noel Pemberton-Billing.

This first issue contains over 80 large sized pages and has many illustrations to complement the articles (including some labels in color!). We welcome this quality periodical and wish Mr. Laird much success with his new venture.

Subscription in the U.S. is \$25.00 for individuals; \$45.00 for institutions. Contact International Discographer, Box 197, Dickson, A.C.T. 2602, Australia.



Philadelphia All the Time: Sounds of the Quaker City 1896-1947, produced by David Goldenberg and Charles Hardy for Spinning Disc Productions.

Now here's a concept: Put a collection together featuring such diverse performers as Bessie Smith, John McCormack, Joe Venuti and W.C. Fields. How are they all tied together? Why, Philadelphia, of course! This new cassette and mini-book feature twenty-one recordings either about the Quaker City or by Philadelphia-based/born artists. Though intended principally for the local market, there are many cuts of interest to record collectors, as well as a variety of musical and spoken word styles. From the sublime (Marian Anderson's "Deep River") to the ridiculous (W.C. Fields' "The Day I Drank a Glass of Water"), there is virtually something here for everyone. The tape is augmented by a fifty-page text, filled with information and profusely illustrated.

The collection includes some great rarities; here is a Berliner by Giannini (1896), a rare recording of a live performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra with spoken comments by Stokowski (1935), as well as the private recording by the Philadelphia Police and Fire-

man's Band (1926). To round out the diversity of the tape, we have John Barrymore's soliloquy from Hamlet (1928), Clarence Williams' Orchestra playing "I Can't Dance, I Got Ants in My Pants" (1934), John Philip Sousa conducting the Rapid Transit Company Co-operative Band (1926), and Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy singing "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life" (1935). I should note, however, that the twenty-one performances are all tastefully arranged in groups, so we don't jump from jazz to opera to spoken word and back again!

A minor complaint is that there are too many misspellings in the text to be coincidental: Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, John Philip Sousa, and Ferruccio Giannini, as well as the aria he sings and the opera it's from. And evidently the producers got their signals mixed up for the title cut, "Philadelphia All the Time." The booklet describes the recording and career of Arthur Pryor, but the version used for this selection is clearly not his!

Philadelphia All the Time is an enjoyable and informative tape and book. It is available in the U.S. for \$13.95 postpaid from Spinning Disc Productions, 840 Winter Rd., Rydal, PA 19046.



The Numerical List of Liberty Music Shop Records, by Jack Raymond.

Here is a tidy little booklet devoted to a subject dear to Mr. Raymond's heart! It is the result of several instalments in Record Research magazine and now details an almost complete listing of over 200 LMS recordings issued from 1933 to 1942; many matrix numbers and recording dates are also included.

Liberty drew material from several sources over the years, and they frequently presented artists and repertoire that had more appeal to urbanites than rural dwellers of the period. This booklet (small in size, but large in achievement) is available directly from the author for just \$3.00 postpaid: Jack Raymond, 3709 George Mason Drive, Apt. 1011, Falls Church, VA 22041.

## Obituaries

Philadelphia Inquirer

October 2, 1992

### Feodor Chaliapin Jr.; portrayed the grandfather in 'Moonstruck'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME — American actor Feodor Chaliapin Jr., 87, perhaps best known for his role as the dog-walking grandfather in the 1987 movie *Moonstruck*, has died.

Mr. Chaliapin died on Sept. 17 after a brief illness at his home in Rome, where he had lived since the 1940s.

Born in Russia, he immigrated with his family to Paris in 1922 but soon left for Hollywood to try his fortune away from the shadow of his famous father, Russian bass Feodor Chaliapin.

He started his acting career in silent movies, where his accented English was no problem, then went on to establish himself as a character ac-

tor and played many minor roles in Italian films.

His career took off in 1986 when, already in his 80s, he was chosen to play the role of the blind, murderous monk George of Burgos in the thriller *The Name of the Rose*, which also starred Sean Connery and F. Murray Abraham.

Next came the role in *Moonstruck*, starring Cher and Nicholas Cage. Other roles included playing Robert De Niro's father in *Stanley and Iris*, and a character in *Inner Circle*, starring Tom Hulce.

Divorced twice, he is survived by his twin sister, Tatiana Chaliapin Chernoff of Rome, and several nieces and nephews.

(Courtesy of Wilfrid Graham)





Above: Looking north from the Gennett Recording Studio site into the Starr-Gennett ruins area.

(cont. from p. 6)

was "Tar Paper Stomp," that years later was revised to become "In the Mood."

Unfortunately, many recording companies were ruined by the Great Depression. In 1929, record sales were \$75 million. In 1930, \$18 million, and in 1931, \$5.5 million. Gennett and numerous small labels went out of business in the early '30s. The Starr Factory continued to make pianos and press records for other concerns, but actual recording slowed to a trickle. Decca bought the rights to Gennett's "Champion" label, and in the 1940s, Joe Davis briefly reviewed the Gennett label for jazz aficionados. Harry Gennett, Jr. and his uncle Fred kept their hand in the business by producing sound effects records. The last Starr piano was made in 1949 and by the mid-1960s, its buildings (750,000 feet under roof) were slowly but steadily deteriorating.

Note: Most of the above material has been excerpted from *The History of the Whitewater Gorge* and Andy Klein's article, *A History of the Starr Piano Factory*.

At right, an 1899 ad promising an "Edison Graphophone" free with a grocery order. Was it deceptive advertising to link the name "Edison" with a Columbia product?

(Courtesy of Bette Haase)

## FREE—EDISON'S GRAPHOPHONE

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Two records Free if cash accompanies the order. Send \$14.75 and receive the groceries, including 51 pounds best granulated sugar and the celebrated Edison Graphophone; or send \$1. and the goods will be sent subject to examination. This is the list of groceries with the regular and cut prices compared:

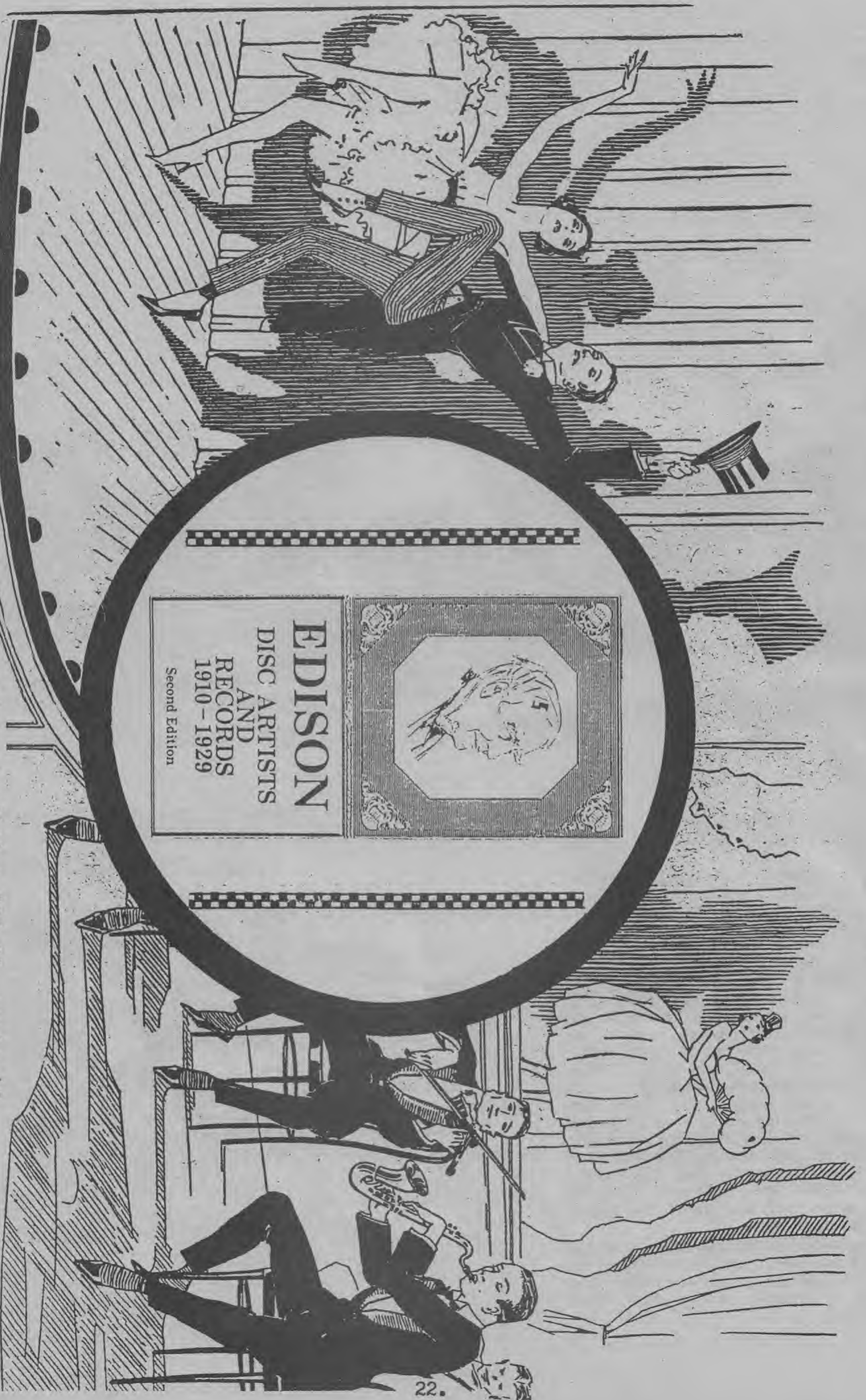
Usual retail price	Usual retail price
51 lbs. best Granulated Sugar, \$2.55	5 lbs. Silver Gloss Starch... .45
3 lbs. Mocha & Java Coffee... .90	2 lbs. Best Baking Powder... .30
12 Cakes Toilet Soap (10c size)... .50	1 qt. Bottle Best Blueing... .15
1 lb. Pure Ground Pepper... .30	1 lb. Ground Cinnamon... .40
10 lb. Pail White Fish, new and latest catch, wooden pail with bail and handle, 1.00	1 box Shoe Blacking... .05
10 bars Santa Claus Laundry Soap (none better)... .40	12 boxes Parlor Matches... .20
3 lb. Whole Nutmegs... .35	1 lb. Pure Ground Mustard... .50
1 lb. cleaned English Currants... .11	1 pt. Bot. Triple Ammonia... .10
1 lb. Pure Ground Ginger... .40	10 lb. bag Best Table Salt... .12
3 lbs. Tea (any kind wanted)... 2.10	1 lb. best Shredded Coconut... .40
2 lbs. Rice (Japan)... .20	1/2 pt. Triple Extract Lemon... .80
1 box Enameline Stove Polish... .05	Vanilla... .80
2 lbs. Best Corn Starch... .17	1 lb. Best Quality Raisins... 1.10
1 lb. Pure Ground Cloves... .40	5 gal. Golden Drip Syrup... 2.00
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